What is a Sender Score And Why Does it Matter?

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For your eye-catching calls-to-action to get clicked on, your carefully crafted and targeted content to get read and engaged with and, heck, your messages even opened altogether, your email needs to first make it into the inbox. And it makes total sense: in order for your email to get interacted with, it needs to get to where it needs to get to in order to be interacted with *there*. Pretty basic.

But, sadly, there may be times when your mailings don't get too far past the clicking of the send button, when their handshake with a recipient ISP gets refused outright. There may be other times when your messages manage to get past that checkpoint only to wind up in your recipient's spam or junk folder, unseen, unread and, well, unfulfilled. In either scenario described, the conclusion isn't a good one – **the email fails to make it to the intended inboxes**. And this might be happening frequently and not simply the odd, occasional occurrence. As an email marketer, that's pretty bad news.

Deliverability is a bear and whether or not it goes poorly for you it should always be a genuine concern. Many factors contribute to your deliverability numbers but, above all, your reputation as an email sender has the most critical impact. Your sending behavior paired with how recipients respond to your messages plays a huge part in determining whether or not anything you send makes it (or, more frighteningly, will ever make it) to your recipient inboxes. Yes, it's that big a deal.

How, then, do you gauge your sender reputation?

One surefire way to learn how you're conducting yourself as an email sender is to find out what your **Sender Score** is. A service of ReturnPath, Sender Scores grade the reputation of outgoing mail servers based on data collected from 60 million or so inboxes from big-time ISPs like Comcast and BellSouth. Specifically, the Sender Score is a grade of how a particular IP address of an outgoing mail server ranks as compared to other such IP

addresses by looking at metrics important to email providers, things like sending volume, spam complaints, rejections, inclusion on public blacklists and email engagement. Pretty serious stuff.

The higher your Sender Score is on a scale from 0 to 100, the more trustworthy you are as a sender. Scores of 90 and better mean you're doing great. Congrats! If your Sender Score falls somewhere between 70 and not quite 90, that means you're doing alright but something's amiss. At the very least, scores above 70 generally have filtering applied to individual email messages and campaigns as opposed to performing email filtering at the IP address level. So, there's that.

A Sender Score of less than 70, though, will see the aggressive filtering of emails coming from your particular IP address, landing your messages in the junk folder pretty consistently. 50 and below and, well, you're pretty much labeled as a spammer. Sorry.

Staying on top of how your Sender Score is doing (and, by extension, how your sender reputation is looking) is paramount as mail servers will often look up your score before deciding what to do with messages that they receive from you. And even if an ISP doesn't check your Sender Score specifically to determine whether or not your messages and content are trustworthy enough to be delivered, they will still look at pretty much the exact same metrics that ReturnPath does in determining your reputation. Bottom line: **it's in your best interest to keep an eye on your Sender Score**.

While there are a variety of tools and resources out there to help make your email marketing efforts all the easier to execute (features like email automation, WYSIWYG editors, and dynamic content blocks), one of the biggest hurdles email marketers, big or small, still have to contend with is the matter of just getting into the inbox. Equipped with the insight gained from understanding your Sender Score (and how to improve it), though, you can jump this obstacle and get in there and get your email opened, your content read, and your calls-to-action clicked on.